DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 138 023 EC 100 657

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TITLE Statement by Dr. Mary F. Berry, Assistant Secretary for Education, Education Division, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
PUB DATE 25 Apr 77
NOTE 12p.; Presented to the Subcommittee on Select Education, Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives (Washington, D.C., April 25, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Exceptional Child Services; *Federal Legislation; *Federal Programs; *Handicapped Children; Instructional Media; Learning Disabilities; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Education for All Handicapped Children Act

ABSTRACT

Focused on is the extension of the various discretionary grant programs of the Education of the Handicapped Act. Discretionary programs are reviewed in relation to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) for the following areas: centers and services to meet special needs of the handicapped, training personnel for the education of the handicapped, research in education of the handicapped, instructional media for the handicapped, and special programs for children with specific learning disabilities. (SBH)

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STATEMENT BY
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.
APRIL 25, 1977
9:30 a.m.

Dr. Berry is accompanied by:

Dr. Edwin W. Martin, Jr., Acting Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education, DHEW

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EC 100 657

Mr. Chairman:

It is a pleasure to appear before this Subcommittee to testify on the extension of the various discretionary grant programs in the Education of the Handicapped Act. The Administration is in the process of conducting a general review of all educational programs with a view toward determining how they may be improved and coordinated. We are, therefore, seeking only a one-year extension of these discretionary programs in the Education of the Handicapped Act. Next year we shall be in a position to recommend our full program with a longer authorization.

As you are aware, the bulk of Federal funds for the education of the handicapped is devoted to the State grant program (Part B), as amended by P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Public Law 94-142, which will become fully operational for the first time in school year 1977-78, changes the State grant program in the following general ways:

--it states that Federal policy is to assure that a free appropriate public education be available to <u>all</u> handicapped children;

--it prioritizes the provision of services first to those unserved, then to those most severely handicapped, then to all other handicapped children;

--it states that handicapped children are to be educated with non-handicapped children whenever appropriate; and,

--it mandates an annual individualized education program for each handicapped child.

The discretionary grant programs of the Education of the Handicapped Act will provide supplemental support to demonstrate and disseminate model programs, to train special education personnel, to foster regional

approaches and cooperation, to increase the knowledge base in special education through research and development activities, and to provide certain services to the handicapped for which there are no other available services. Through a combination of technical assistance, monitoring, direct aid, and capacity building activities, Federal efforts in the area of education for the handicapped will help to assure that all States will meet the mandate of the law to provide full educational opportunity for all handicapped children and to improve the quality of the services provided.

Part C--Centers and Services to Meet Special Needs of the Handicapped

Taking each in turn, Mr. Chairman, I would now like to review with you the discretionary programs beginning with Part C--Centers and Services to Meet Special Needs of the Handicapped. Under Section 621, Regional Resource Centers are currently concentrating their efforts on assisting State and local agencies in meeting the full service requirements of P.L. 94-142. While the primary focus of the Act at this time is identifying all handicapped children, the centers will also provide assistance in determining the needs of each handicapped child and developing individualized programs. We are currently funding 13 of these centers at a cost of $9,750,000. Approximately 54 percent of this amount is to be used in support of demonstration models, training of SEA personnel, and dissemination of information to encourage appropriate State appraisal and educational programming. During the coming year, this activity is expected to serve over 90,000 children, and 9,000 personnel will receive training. Given the accomplishments of recent

years, the need for this authority may diminish since local or State procedures for developing individualized programs for handicapped children should be well in place.

Our program for the deaf-blind (Sec. 622) has been enormously successful in creating educational opportunities for these catastrophically impaired children. More than 4,500 educational placements are now served by ten centers, as contrasted with less than 100 served by six centers when the program was initiated in 1969. Despite this evidence of growth, considerable regional variation exists in the amount and quality of services provided. According to program data, of the estimated 6,000 to 7,000 deaf-blind children, 5,996 have been identified. Of the identified children, 1,480 are receiving no full-time or part-time educational services. An additional 300 deaf-blind children now receiving part-time educational services need full-time educational programs. As P.L. 94-142 is fully implemented, we think it will be possible to terminate this program. However, discussions with the States indicate that termination of the program now would cause severe problems and result in children failing to receive appropriate educational programming. Although the States are more than matching the Federal share, the costs per pupil are so high--$8,000 to $10,000--that sudden termination would present many communities with impossible budget demands. In addition to this basic budget issue, major setbacks in reaching the program goals have been caused by the acute shortage of trained teacher and teacher-aide personnel, inadequacy of facilities, and the lack of availability of instructional materials and technology.

The early childhood education program authorized by Sec. 623 has been one of the most effective Federal programs for the handicapped. Its impact has been enormous in stimulating interest in, and providing new approaches to, early childhood education. The Federal strategy is to build the capacity of State, local, and private non-profit educational organizations to establish and expand programs for preschool children which use the best tested practices. Because P.L. 94-142 requires educational services for children beginning at age three (if not inconsistent with State law or practice), this capacity-building program will complement the main service efforts required of States and LEAs by developing more effective models of preschool interventions. Our claims of success in the area are supported by a third party evaluation conducted by the Battelle Memorial Institute from 1973 to 1976. This study concluded that the projects promoted social-personal growth, influenced growth in adaptive, cognitive and communication areas. If I were to be allowed only one argument for the contination of this effort, I would point out that of the approximately 1,000,000 children (0-8 years of age) having handicapping conditions, just 30 percent of these children are being served in varying degrees through demonstration and outreach projects, Head Start and day care programs, public education day programs and through State supported activities.

Another major programming area in Part C is Sec. 625 which provides vocational, technical, postsecondary, and adult educational opportunities for deaf and other handicapped persons. It is directed to career education and the supportive services relative to career placement, and to the teaching of skills necessary to function successfully in daily life.

Programs include, but are not limited to, preparation for job placement in the white collar, skilled and unskilled occupational categories. In an attempt to better utilize the available resources, priority funding consideration is given to:

--programs serving multi-State regions or large population centers;

--programs adapting existing programs of vocational, technical, postsecondary, or adult education to the special needs of handicapped persons; and,

--programs designed to serve areas where a need for such services is clearly demonstrated.

Our projects are demonstrating the abilities of persons with handicaps to participate in regular programs if provided with appropriate support services. The success of this program is demonstrated by the fact that 90 percent of the persons who participate are placed in employment commensurate with their skills. Projects are providing educational opportunity at costs considerably lower than those associated with specialized institutions, although specialized institutions do play a legitimate role in a total service delivery system. This is an area in which we can expect considerable demand for assistance, particularly as the provisions of Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require increased access to higher education.

Part D--Training Personnel for the Education of the Handicapped

Mr. Chairman, let us now focus on the special education manpower development program, Part D, which is critically needed. The full service mandate of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and the provision that handicapped children be placed in the "least restrictive environment" has underlined the need not only for special education teachers but for special training for teachers in regular classrooms as well. There is a great need to improve the capability of institutions of higher education to adequately train those preparing for or already engaged in regular classroom teaching and administration. Our estimates indicate that in order for the educational system to meet its full service need commitment of approximately 500,000 teachers, an additional 260,000 specially trained teachers will be required.

In academic year 1976-1977 assistance was provided to approximately 8,030 pre-service students, 13,710 in-service students, and 11,543 regular classroom teachers through 604 projects. Those projects concentrated on the following activities:

--training of educational personnel to meet the needs of severely handicapped children;

--training of minority group specialists to serve the educational needs of minority group handicapped children;

--training of personnel for early childhood programs;

--training of paraprofessionals;

--training of personnel to provide vocational education for the handicapped;

--training of regular classroom teachers to meet the needs of handicapped children in regular classroom situations.

Part D also contains a special authorization (Sec. 633) for grants and contracts to disseminate information about education for the handicapped, to provide referral services for parents of handicapped children in order that they may be assisted in their attempts to locate appropriate educational programs for their children, and to encourage people to enter the field of special education. Again, this effort is obviously an essential complement to P.L. 94-142.

Part E--Research in Education of the Handicapped

Part E supports research and development activities to improve educational opportunities for handicapped children. Activities supported include the development, validation, and dissemination of alternative educational approaches to problems specific to the education of the handicapped. Also included is the examination of such issues as the least restrictive arrangements for service delivery and the availability of materials and curriculum, and other products of research, to assure their broadest possible utilization and implementation.

I would like to share with you just a few examples of the accomplishments of Part E. This program has been highly successful in the development of curricular products in areas such as social studies, science, mathematics, physical education and personnel skills. All but one of the curricula packets are now being commercially marketed. In the area of technology, we have funded research which resulted in the development of communication apparatus for the severely handicapped and blind person. The development of reading devices for the blind such as the Optacon and the Kurzweil Reading Machine have had an immediate effect on the efforts of this segment of the handicapped population in reaching its full educational potential.

Our program approach reflects a targeting of research issues based on the advice of professionals and constituent groups which has been obtained through conferences and panel meetings. Currently the funds are distributed based on the following activities:

--early childhood education

--full school services

--career education

--severely handicapped

--personnel development

--child advocacy.

At present, Mr. Chairman, the demand for research support is so great that only five to eight percent of requests can be funded.

Part F--Instructional Media for the Handicapped

Part F is a permanent authority and does not expire at the end of Fiscal Year 1977. The objective of the program is to provide handicapped learners with special educational materials. Among the major program thrusts are:

--Captioned films for the deaf reaching an annual audience of more than 3.5 million individuals;

--Captioned TV and telecommunications programs which reach literally millions. For example: Captioned News which is broadcast five nights weekly, is estimated to reach approximately six million viewers per each nightly broadcast;

--National Instructional Material Information System;

--Recordings for the Blind;

--National Theatre of the Deaf;

--Marketing and implementation activities.

Part G--Special Programs for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities

The Office of Education is in agreement with S. 725, Senator Jennings Randolph's bill, which does not extend Part G (Special Programs for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities). The rationale for ending the special program for children with learning disabilities is that Congress has now included such children in the basic definition of "handicapped" and they are eligible for support under the grants to State and local agency provisions. Our general programs which support research and training can also be used to support activities in the area of learning disabilities.

You should be aware, however, that we are now expending approximately $9 million in FY 1977 in child service projects in the learning disability area under Part G. It is essential that an opportunity be provided for these activities to be completed in a normal fashion. Therefore, if the authority for Part G is not renewed after FY 1977, we are prepared to ask the Appropriations Committees to reprogram sums from Part G in the President's 1978 budget to Part E so that continuations after this year would be under Part E.

As a final note, we would like to focus attention on the area of research, innovation, and demonstration relating to the education of the handicapped. We are currently supporting various activities in this area under Part C (severely handicapped, early childhood, and adult programs), Part E (general research) and Part G (learning disabilities). Each of these authorities has special conditions and limitations which apply to projects supported under it. We believe the time has come to consider a more comprehensive approach to the need for research and demonstration in the education of the handicapped. Therefore, while supporting the extension of existing authorities

in this area for an additional year, we hope the Subcommittee will be receptive to any later proposals we may offer to provide such a comprehensive approach for the support of this important work.

Again, let me thank the Subcommittee for your leadership in the area of education of the handicapped.